

Annual Operating Instructions
And
Resource Protection Nonuse
Memorandum of Understanding(MOU)
South Escudilla Allotment
Alpine Ranger District
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
2013 grazing season

1. NON-USE AGREEMENT/MOU

I have approved your application for complete Non-Use for resource protection on the South Escudilla Allotment for the 2013 grazing season. The reason cited for Non-Use is that the majority of your allotment has large amounts of moderate or high fire severity areas. Post fire monitoring concluded that another year of rest would be best for plant health and soil stability. Following the 2013 growing season, inspections will be conducted to assess the next year's potential for your allotment to support livestock grazing.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the South Escudilla Allotment:

- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on upland perennial grass species.
- 25% use, by number of growing leaders, on upland browse species.
- 25% use, by weight of current year's growth, on riparian grass species.
- 25% use, by number of growing leader's, on riparian browse species.
- Within Northern goshawk territories, a utilization level in forested areas (includes small openings) of: 20% average by weight.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

Although no livestock grazing on the South Escudilla Allotment is currently authorized for the 2013 grazing year, the District may still conduct key area monitoring on the allotment. This monitoring would be used to document grazing by wild ungulates (primarily elk), for use in future planning and recommendations to the Arizona Department of Game and Fish. This information will also aid in determining range condition for future livestock grazing authorization. A key area is defined as, *"a portion of range, which because of its location, grazing or browsing value, and/or use, serves as an indicative sample of range conditions, trend, or degree of use seasonally. A key area guides the general area of which it is part,"* (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June, 1997).

Utilization measurements will be taken on key livestock and/or wildlife forage plants (key species). Key forage species are defined as, *"1. Forage species (plants) whose use serves as an indicator to the degree of use of associated species. In many cases, key species include indicator*



species and species traditionally referenced as increaser, decreasers, desirables, or intermediates. 2. Those species (plants) which must, because of their importance, be considered in the management program” (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species’ current year’s leaders, as well as % use, by weight on riparian grasses.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.
- Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees and shrubs.

District personnel will contact the permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas, when practical. Permittee participation is encouraged. Forage utilization estimates will be consistent with the Forest Service Range Analysis Handbook methodology, and may also include FS Regional stubble-height standards, as well as other techniques generally accepted in the field of range management.

4. RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before cattle are allowed into a pasture. It is the permittee’s responsibility to ensure that range improvements remain functional, whether the allotment is stocked or not. This includes boundary fences in pastures not currently being grazed. Fences must remain in a state that prevents the passage of cattle. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction or reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

5. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The instructions below relate to threatened, endangered, and proposed to be listed species, as well as range/watershed conditions.

- No salt or mineral block may be placed in protected and restricted Mexican spotted owl habitat from February 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock).
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.

6. OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The permittee must obtain permission from the District Ranger, before conducting earth-disturbing activities on the National Forest. The Forest Service will arrange inspections of project areas and will prepare appropriate environmental and cultural documents before earth-disturbing activities proceed. These activities include road/earthen tank maintenance, as well as

construction/reconstruction of trails, roads, earthen tanks, etc. Do not conduct any earth-disturbing activities on the Forest without written clearance from this office. Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block is not authorized on the National Forest.

These Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3, and comply with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for the South Escudilla Allotment. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

This decision is subject to administrative review, pursuant to 36 CFR 251; and any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251. In accordance with 36 CFR 251.84, if you file an appeal, I am willing to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have with my decision. If you file an appeal, you may request an oral presentation in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.97). Additionally, if you file an appeal, you may request a stay of my decision in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.91).

A notice of appeal must be filed with Jim Zornes, Forest Supervisor, P.O. Box 640, 30 S. Chiricahua Dr., Springerville AZ 85938, within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with Richard Davalos, District Ranger, Alpine Ranger District, P.O. Box 469, 42634 HWY 180/191, Alpine, AZ 85920.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the South Escudilla Allotment. If you have any questions please contact Ron Mortensen, or Curtis Chee at (928) 339-5000, or (928) 333-4372. Thank you.